

Today I will talk about the work of Michael Knigin (Kni as in Evel ~~Knie~~vel and gin as in begin) and explore with you the lithographs, *Lone Lily* and *Lonely Tune* which he created in 1999. First, however, I will tell you about Michael Knigin: an artist, painter, printmaker, photographer, researcher, and life-long educator. Because of this latter role his work was selected for the month of November in honor of International Education Week which is the 12th through the 16th of this month. The word international is significant here and as I proceed you will be aware that his efforts in education (and in art) extend across the world. However, my presentation will focus mainly on his pioneering artistic accomplishments and strong humanistic motivations – the latter being strikingly similar to those of our own Abraham Rattner.

Let me introduce Michael by quoting from a ‘letter to the editor’ published in the NY Times, on the 20th of February 2011.

...Michael Knigin passed away a few weeks ago, on Jan. 19. Known primarily as a painter and a printmaker, he was also a passionate advocate for wildlife conservation and ecological sanity. Through powerful visual imagery and great technical mastery of his mediums he gave voice to his commitments and made a difference, as an artist and as a human being.

As an artist, lithographer and researcher, he became a prominent force in the “New Lithography” movement of the 1970s.

The letter was sent by Andrew Vlady, a recognized fine-art printer¹ who met Michael when they began art school together at Temple University. They became life-long friends and significant collaborators. Andrew’s reference to “the New Lithography movement of the 1970s” caused me to do some research to better understand this movement and Michael Knigin’s contributions.

The thread started when I found that Andrew Vlady worked at Gemini G.E.L.². Gemini is an artists’ workshop and publisher of limited-edition prints and sculptures located in Los Angeles. It was founded in 1966 by master printer Ken Tyler. Tyler was trained at Tamarind Lithography Workshop.

Michael Knigin worked under Ken Tyler at Tamarind from October through December 1964 while on a Ford Foundation Fellowship. There was at the time disharmony between Tyler, then Technical Director at Tamarind, and founding Director, June Wayne. The conflict was over the “...stifling academic manner...” in which visiting artists were required to approach the lithographic printing process. This rift caused Michael to cut short his 15-month fellowship and return to Tyler Art School at Temple University in early

¹ His collaborative works are in a number major American museums.

² G.E.L. stands for Graphic Editions Limited

1965. In his paper titled “Michael Knigin: Anatomy of a Master Artist-Lithographer³,” Andrew Vlady provides this assessment of this decision:

Knigin, who was equally headstrong as Tyler and Wayne, took neither side. He could not and would not submit to all the squabbling nor to the one thing that Wayne and Tyler had in common – their cavalier attitude towards others.

The same year Michael returned to Temple University, Tyler left the Tamarind Workshop and founded Gemini Ltd. which, with two new partners – Stan Grinstein and Sidney Felsen, became Gemini G.E.L. in 1966. Despite some turmoil, fine-art lithography had begun a tremendous renaissance in the US. Let me quote from the Gemini website an assessment published on their 50th anniversary:

Today, it is hard to remember that when Gemini was founded in 1966, fine-art printmaking was on the verge of both a technical renaissance and a soaring popularity, as the torch of new art passed from France to America. The initial focus of the print revival was devoted to lithography, primarily as a result of the training master printers received at the Tamarind Lithography Workshop, founded in Los Angeles in 1960.

So, we find that it is Tamarind, now the Tamarind Institute of the University of New Mexico (Albuquerque), that is recognized as a primary initiator of this revival. The founding director of Tamarind, June Wayne, established the lithography workshop, in her words, “...as a means to ‘rescue’ the dying art of lithography,” here I am quoting from the Institute’s website. Among the long-rang goals of the Workshop were:

- *to create a pool of master artisan-printers in the United States by training apprentices;*
- *to develop a group of American artists of diverse styles into masters of this medium;*
- *to habituate each artist and artisan to intimate collaboration so that each becomes responsive and stimulating to the other in the work situation encouraging both to experiment widely and extend the expressive potential of the medium;*

As envisioned by June Wayne in 1960, these master-printers would then go on to establish workshops across the country both for training additional fine-art lithographers and as centers for artistic collaboration and research.

³ Andrew Vlady generously developed and provided me with the paper titled “Michael Knigin: Anatomy of a Master Artist-Lithographer” which documents the early stages of Michael’s education and his subsequent development into a leading pioneer in the “New Lithography” in the 1970s and in the use of computer technology as an enabler of his most creative work. Much of the detailed history of the conflicts that arose and Knigin’s response are from this paper.

Notably, the renaissance that was occurring at Tamarind and Gemini was also happening at about the same time here in Tampa with the 1968 founding of Graphicstudio⁴ at the University of South Florida by Dr. Donald Saff. In New York City, one of the principal proponents of this new initiative was Michael Knigin. After completing his BFA at Tyler, he then joined the Pratt Institute's Graphic Center in Manhattan to teach and further their program to create a fine-art printing workshop. He continued his training in fine-art lithography as a printer at Hollanders Workshop in New York (in 1966) and as a master printer at Collectors Press in San Francisco (in 1967). In both locations he worked with Tamarind-trained master printers. During this period, he worked with Pearson, Motherwell, D'Archangelo, Nevelson, Soyer, Steinberg, and Stern in New York and Diebenkorn, Corbet, Gordon, Nieri, Connors, and Melchert in San Francisco.

Michael, and fellow Tyler graduate Roger Loft, opened their own publishing company, Chiron Press, in 1968 and included a silkscreen printing facility. This was the first facility in the United States that combined lithography and screen-printing⁵. The shop printed and published editions for the most renowned contemporary artists, including Andy Warhol and Roy Lichtenstein⁶.

Knigin and Loft purchased Chiron Press from its creator, artist Stephen (Steve) Poleskie. Poleskie is an exceptionally interesting character who, in addition to being a self-taught abstract artist and creating Chiron Press⁷ in 1963, is an accomplished author, an "artflyer" (i.e. he did "art" by flying his stunt airplane and skywriting), and a professor emeritus at Cornell University. For our tour of fine-art printing and Michael Knigin, it is important to point out the significance of Chiron Press under the leadership of Poleskie from 1963 to 1968. I present the following from an ArtNet.com "News" [article](#) published in 2013:

Despite its brief five-year run, Chiron Press was responsible for a major shift in how artists used screen printing in their creative processes. Screen printing has risen from an industrial process to a Fine-art form. The sheer number of influential artists

⁴ Graphicstudio was founded by Dr. Donald J. Saff as part of the renaissance in American printmaking in the 1960s, in the company of studios such as ULAE, Tamarind, and Gemini GEL. This renaissance brought artists involved in the Pop art movement, such as Robert Rauschenberg, James Rosenquist, and Jim Dine, together with a growing number of trained printmakers, and with an American public desiring to collect affordable art.

One of the first artists to work at Graphicstudio was Robert Rauschenberg, whose energy perfectly fit the philosophy and practice of the new workshop. The artist, along with a dedicated group of faculty, staff and students, avidly experimented with forms and techniques—photo transfer, cyanotype, sepia prints, printing on cloth and ceramics, sculptures with new materials, a hundred-foot-long photograph—and ultimately completed over sixty editions. The studio's reputation as a place where faculty and staff will eagerly pursue and collaborate with the artist's every idea and inspiration was established in those early days, and this innovative environment continues to be a major factor in its continuing success.

⁵ These last details I obtained from Michael Knigin's website which is still maintained under the auspices of his wife, artist Joan Kraisky.

⁶ Other notables: Vaserelly, James Brooks, Jules Olitsky, Wayne Thiebold, Wolf Kahn, Paul Jenkins, Philip Pearlstein, Ilya Bolotowsky, Paul Cadmus, Brice Mardin, Walasse Ting.

⁷ named after the mythical centaur

who made prints at Chiron Press reads like a who's-who of the 1960s art world, and many of those artists would go on to achieve art superstar status.

I found the following included in the list of those who worked with Poleskie at Chiron: Andy Warhol, Roy Lichtenstein, Larry Rivers, James Rosenquist, Claes Oldenburg, Brice Marden (he was hired to work at Chiron), Louise Nevelson, Alfred Jensen, Marisol, Helen Frankenthaler, Elaine De Kooning, Nicholas Krushenick, and Richard Anuszkiewicz. Poleskie sold Chiron Press, so that he could devote more time to his own artwork. In 1968, he moved to Ithaca, NY, and accepted a teaching position in the art department at Cornell University.

Michael sold his lithographic equipment to Andrew Vlady in 1971⁸ to allow more time for teaching, writing, and completion of the work on the Pratt Graphic Center. About this time, he completed two books, with co-author and fellow artist Murray Zimiles. "The Technique of Fine-Art Lithography," published in 1970 was perhaps the first textbook for students of fine-art lithography. They published a revised edition in 1977, by this time Michael had completed his work at the Pratt's Graphic Center and was a professor at the Pratt Institute in Brooklyn, NY. Their second book "Contemporary Lithographic Workshops Around the World" appeared in 1974. It lists 17 "lithographic workshops" in North America and another 20 throughout Europe. Things really had heated up in the world of fine-art lithography! Our own Linda Berghoff has developed a wonderful paper titled, "The Collaborative Print Workshop in America Since 1960: A Brief History," which goes beyond the focus I am presenting in describing this exciting time, important workshops and innovators, and the pioneering work at Graphicstudio.

"Pioneering work" is what motivated Tyler to leave Tamarind and establish Gemini and later Tyler Graphics, it is also the earmark of the efforts under Saff, Rosenquist, and Rauschenburg at Graphicstudio, and those of Michael Knigin throughout his career. It is this characteristic that motivated Andrew Vlady's comment that he was a "*prominent force in the 'New Lithography' movement of the 1970's.*" In particular, Michael was pioneering in using mylar (a commercial name for an acetate film) in lithographic transfers. This approach became known as the "Mylar Method." It was the subject of significant controversy in the late 1970s and early 80s – in part because of both misunderstanding and ideology. I will return to this transfer method when I discuss our lithographs. Let me pick up on Michael's career following the sale of Chiron Press and completion of his first two books.

⁸ In June of 1971, Knigin's art school companion, Andrew Vlady, had returned to the east coast after working for two years at Gemini G.E.L. under Ken Tyler and purchased Knigin's half of Chiron Press – the lithography half. He re-registered the company as Chiron Art and in June 1972 moved the press and stones to Mexico City where he re-named it Kyron Ediciones Gráficas Limitadas.

In 1974, the Israel Museum and the Jerusalem Foundation invited Michael to Israel with the charge to establish the first professional lithographic and silk screen atelier in Israel. This atelier is the Burston Graphic Center located in Jerusalem. During this work-year in Israel, Knigin began meeting survivors of the Holocaust. As he absorbed their experiences, he began interpreting their suffering through sketches that became montages. In recognition of this interest and immersion, the Israel Museum granted Knigin full and unrestricted access to its Holocaust archives. As a result, he was able to see real images of the Holocaust firsthand.

He later [explained](#):

"I was introduced to people at the Holocaust Museum [Yad-va-shem], who gave me access to their archives, so I photographed them at the museum," ... "These were pictures of the victims in the camps, of revolts, deportation, ghettos, liberation and of Anne Frank," ... "Many of these pictures were taken by the German soldiers."

He goes on to say:

"I couldn't believe man's inhumanity against man, and I decided to copy these photographs, to use in my own series about this time in history."

In other [interviews](#) he said:

"I feel the responsibility of the artist, and of any enlightened human being, is to continue to make us aware of the past. We cannot escape this horrible reality. We have a responsibility to face it and learn its lessons."

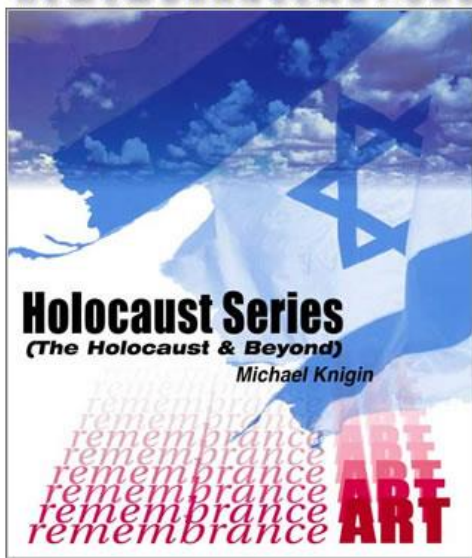
He started his "Holocaust Series," in 1977 and continued the effort for the rest of his life producing more than 500 images. The copies he brought back from Israel were photographs and working with them was very difficult until he was introduced to Photoshop, in the early 1990s.

Sections Remembrance 2000:

- Oppression
- Deportation
- Ghetto
- Revolt
- Camps
- Liberation
- DP Camps
- Immigration
- Aftermath
- Righteous Gentiles
- Anne Frank

He subsequently produced major exhibits and editions titled ["Remembrance 2000"](#). This work lives on in at the Sherwin Miller Museum of Jewish Art in Tulsa, Oklahoma, where it is on view. I think, he considered it his signature achievement. In 2016 his wife, artist Joan Kraisky, curated an exhibit ["Michael Knigin: The Holocaust and Anne Frank"](#) derived from the "Series."

From the Remembrance 2000 website:



In [discussing the Holocaust series](#), Knigin reveals a great deal about both his artistic approach and his personal concerns. Again, let me quote:

In my paintings and graphics, I seek to isolate objects and images from their mundane contexts and reorganize them, thereby granting them a new life. I select colors, textures and forms that complement the realistic images that I use. The elements reinforce the fact that I am creating something new, not merely replicating nature's truths.

My concern with themes of contrast continually runs through my work: Man and nature; human's continual encroachment on the environment; the dehumanization of mankind; the old and new; the classical and the contemporary; the lack of concern with the beautiful and the elegant in our mainstream culture.

It is this dehumanization of mankind that has led to my intense interest in the Holocaust.

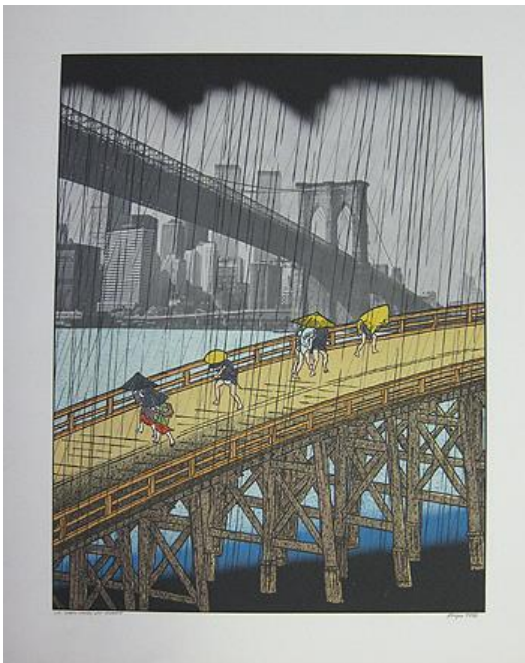
We hear an echo of our own Abraham Rattner. Let me note also that there are many parallels in their lives and careers. Their families both came to the US in the late 1800's to escape pogroms under the Russian Tsars. Also, their careers included involvement with Israel and homes and/or studios in East Hampton.

Let me return to Michael's extensive catalog. A very successful series of prints, among the many in his prolific career, is his Japanese Suite, produced between 1978 and 1981. In discussing this suite⁹, he acknowledges a life-long fascination with nineteenth-century



the basis of his Holocaust Series.

The Japanese Suite lithographs were featured



in an
exhibit at
the US

Japanese Ukiyo-e woodblock prints. His lithographs have as a background Knigin's photographic images of New York on which he hand-painted his drawings (approximately 100) of classic Japanese woodblock prints. There are over 50 paintings in the set. Such juxtaposed images are very much a mark of his style – one that later was



Department of State in 1979 which drew the attention of Secretary Cyrus Vance and the Japanese Prime Minister Ohira. Images from the "Suite" were included in a May 1991 exhibit at the Newark NJ Public Library titled Hidden Treasures, a display of the library's extensive holdings of Japanese art. Commenting that this is no ordinary exhibition of Japanese art, reviewer Vivien Raynor in the NY Times, singles out Michael Knigin's lithograph which, I

quote, *"...co-opts Hiroshige's "Sudden Shower." Knigin features the famous image of a*

⁹ An informative article about the Japanese Suite appeared on the website ThingsAsian.com in 2003. (cf. <http://thingsasian.com/search/node/Michael%20Knigin>)

trestle bridge with figures in driving rain as a pontoon running alongside a photo-reproduction of the Brooklyn Bridge.”

If you can make it out, you will note that the NY skyline in the image includes the Brooklyn Bridge and farther in the distance, the Twin Towers. Another of his creations is Silent Waters, alternately titled, in recent years, Silent Witness. A signed, serigraph completed in 1978. Again, we note the twin towers, which often appeared in such pieces and may account for its more recent title and some of the continued interest in Knigin’s work.

Phyllis Braff of the NY Times, in March 1986, reviewed the exhibit “Paperworks ‘86”¹⁰. In the article titled “Art: Bending Paper into a Complex Modern Medium” she observed:

Surprising combinations of seemingly incongruous things form the basis of Michael Knigin’s small collages. Most use a close-up segment of something recognizable – a swan, a horse, a fish or a rose – adjacent to a vigorous, abstract design. Part of the artistry is the way both elements take a key role in structuring the composition. Wit, technical skill and a feeling for color are present, but the works tend to seem only temporarily beguiling, and may not have lasting power.



While I don’t want to claim to understand her concept of “lasting power,” I will comment that 32 years later [you can find numerous galleries around the world](#) who are offering Michael’s fine-art prints for sale. One such gallery, which perhaps is a little provincial being located in Eastern Long Island (Bridgehampton), is LSD Art. While this is a catchy name, it isn’t centered around art created while experiencing acid trips but derives its name from owner Leonard S. Davenport.

I found this site helpful in that Davenport attempts to catalog Knigin’s highly eclectic portfolio. In addition to the Holocaust and Japanese, his series include:

¹⁰ at Gallery 169 in Great Neck, LI

- *Selection of 1960s Abstract lithographs / serigraphs (a 1968 serigraph “Untitled” was acquired by the Smithsonian American Art Museum in 1970)*
- *1990 NASA series*
- *Women & Rockets*
- *Abstract sketches*
- *Classic nudes*
- *Miraculous Misfits*
- *Khmer Rouge Series, described as reproductions of original photos of prisoners before they were executed - presented in powerful, but disturbing fashion.*

Other sites and Knigin’s website list:

- *Bird Suite*
- *Abstract Landscapes (210 prints)*
- *Fragile Planet (27 prints)*

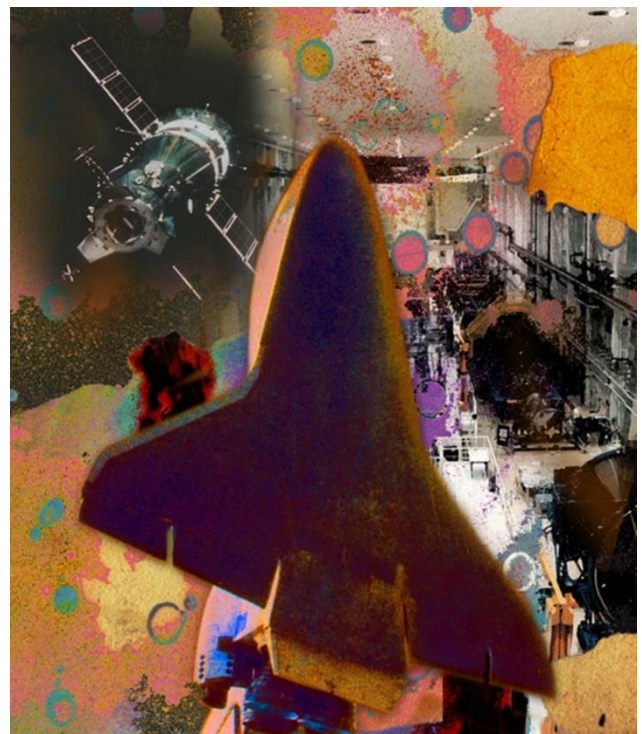


The NASA series resulted from a commission of sorts. In 1988 and 1991, Knigin was appointed to the NASA Art Team to interpret the launch of Discovery and the touchdown of Atlantis, respectively. The piece above, created in 1988, references the launch.

Another example from his NASA Series is “Win the Peace” an archival pigment print created in 2008. This print, along with one titled “Ace the Test” are included in the Smithsonian Air and Space Museum exhibition “Imagining Outside the Space Craft.” This exhibition features 11 artists who were inspired to create art based on NASA photographs of Extra Vehicular Activity. It is significant that the two Knigin pieces are the first digitally generated images to be accepted for archiving by the Smithsonian Institution.

My searches also revealed series based on his photography focused on:

- Thailand
- Montauk waves



- Fire works

His photographic work, just mentioned, was well represented on the [RoGallery website](#), along with giclee prints in a series called:

- Psychedelic Skies

Much of this work relied heavily on computer and advanced printing technologies. In the early 1990's, Knigin discovered Adobe Photoshop which enabled him to combine his images – photographs¹¹ or original artwork – in powerful and prolific abundance. The use of Photoshop enabled Michael to complete the Holocaust Suite, as I said, perhaps his most significant and lasting work.

Knigin was a pioneer and advocate for the use of the computer as an important addition to the artist's repertoire for self-expression. I quote from his description of his artistic process, published in 1999:

Many of my Images are created by hand as original collages, then scanned into the computer, manipulated and colorized; other images are created solely with the help of this amazing tool with its myriad of possible effects. My involvement with the computer has been going on for about six years, my involvement with painting for approximately thirty years. Imaging on the computer gives me the freedom and flexibility to create and reinterpret images that I previously created by hand as collages. I then print them as unique pieces, either on canvas, or on hand-made paper, utilizing two types of state-of-the-art digital printers, with the capacity of printing at 600 dpi and 1400 dpi, achieving amazing clarity. These printers can print from 72 inches wide to 30 feet in length. The digital process saves the immense expenses that are involved in editioning, as in lithography, or silk-screening. It also facilitates customization of one-of-a kind pieces. I use the computer as a technical vehicle for conveying my esthetic. Many times, I augment the image, utilizing the vast range of possibilities that certain computer programs offer. I also combine the use of the computer with hand painting certain images to add to the surface quality and augment the color. The initial image that I create, i.e., the collage (sketch), is the spontaneous personalization of my sensibilities.

...

The computer becomes the press, the brush, the pencil and the paint.

¹¹ His website "gallery" has a wonderful collection of his photos, including those found in the Japanese and the Miraculous Misfits suites. http://michaelknigin.net/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=22&Itemid=39&album=285

I found on the LSD Art site an abbreviated list (the full list is over 60) of the museums in which his work is or was exhibited:

... the Albright-Knox Museum, Brooklyn Museum, Carnegie Mellon Institute, Cooper Hewitt Museum, Smithsonian Air and Space Museum, Library of Congress, McNay Museum, Portland Museum of Art, Smithsonian Museum of American Art, Whitney Museum of American Art, and the Worcester Museum of Art.

He has received many awards including a Clio Award¹² for art direction, a fellowship of the American Film Institute in Los Angeles, an Art and Technology Grant, and two Certificates of Merit from the National Society of Illustrators.

I want to end this portion of the presentation by quoting excerpts from a remembrance published in December 2013 in Fine Art Magazine. There, an article by Victor Forbes titled "Whitney, Smithsonian NASA, and Frankfurt Museum add Michael Knigin Works to Permanent Collections," spoke both of his work and of him personally:

Somewhere between mad scientist and unbridled genius, Michael Knigin's accomplishments in the art area are more than significant. An early Photoshop devotee, he helped start the digital age of computer-generated graphics while never losing an artist's sensitivity to the subject matter and to the work of those who came before him. His voluminous output consists of many series - from social commentary to the environment, birds, flowers, fish, vintage nudes, carnival animals, fireworks, waves, and outer space scenes. He has been in 30 one-man shows, and his work has been included in over 150 group shows around the world. His contributions to Israel and the United States are well respected by artists, educators, and collectors alike.

Michael was a college professor carving new territory in printmaking, and also took on freelance work as a creative director or an art director. His clientele ranged from a soft drink company in the Adirondacks to The Hamptons Classical Musical Festival. We often stopped in at his home studio, which he shared with his lovely wife, the artist Joan Kraisky, when we were in the Hamptons. His setup was a slew of computers and printers, with ink lines running across tables from bottles to keep a fresh supply going at all times. Between his commissioned work and his personal river of creativity, the printers were running day and night. His bold paintings, non-digitized, fill the house and there was always an aura of fun, creativity and happiness around Michael no matter the circumstances. He isn't quite recognized in

¹² The Clio Awards is an annual award program that recognizes innovation and creative excellence in advertising, design and communication (including film?), as judged by an international panel of advertising professionals.

the upper echelons of the collecting art world, but museums and discerning individuals have recognized the greatness of the man and his talent.

Three recent posthumous exhibitions attest to the importance and lasting value of Knigin's work, which is as much a philosophical statement as a painting or graphic. Michael was loved and respected as an artist, educator, curator, author and elder statesman of the Hamptons and New York City Art scene.

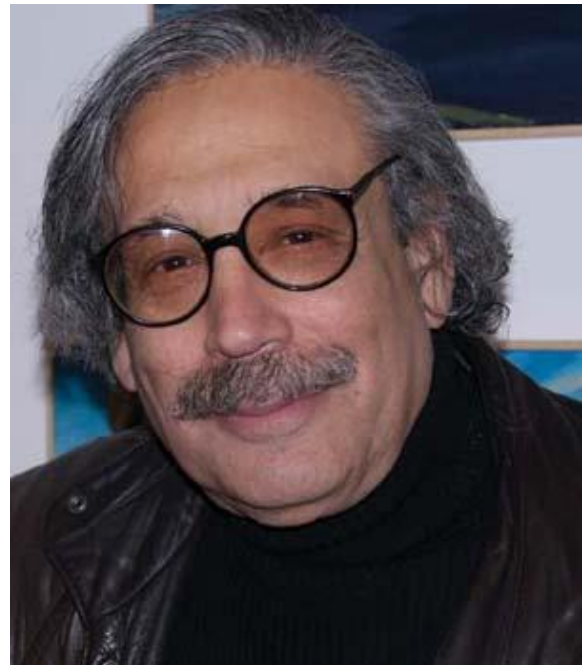
Michael's work (Special Bird, screenprint 1971) was included in "Sinister Pop," the fourth in a two-year series of exhibitions which reassessed the collection of the Whitney Museum of American Art in anticipation of the Museum's move downtown. "Sinister Pop" focused on Pop's darker side as it distorts and critiques the American dream. Knigin's work is displayed among those by acknowledged masters such as Jasper Johns, Claes Oldenburg, Ed Roucha, and Andy Warhol.



The picture to the left I believe dates from around 1990 (Michael is in his late 40's). His death, from lung cancer in 2011, was cause for many memoriam articles. One very informative article was a [reprint of a 2008](#)

[highlight](#). It provided the picture to the right.

With this, believe it or



not, **abbreviated** introduction to Michael Knigin let me now turn to consideration of our advertised Focus Friday selection, *Lone Lily* and its partner *Lonely Tune*. As I mentioned earlier, this work from our works-on-paper collection was selected because of Knigin's pre-eminence in education. The story of how this work came into the Leepa-Rattner collection is interesting.

"Lone Lily" is one of 4 Knigin lithographic prints received by Leepa Rattner in 2001 as part of the much larger "Canadian Collection." The collection, in total, numbers 173 prints. It is called "Canadian" because it was obtained as part of an anonymous donation of a very large collection of prints originally owned by investors located in British Columbia. A LRMA press release explained:

This gift was brokered by St. Petersburg Junior College through the Foundation Office of Eckerd College. It provided an extensive collection of fine-art graphics created at Vinalhaven Studios, Crown Press and other contemporary print ateliers in the United States and Canada by artists such as Robert Indiana, Charles Hewitt, Richard Mock, Allison Saar, Komar and Melamid, and the Cuban collaborative, Los Carpentieros.

Below, left, is LRMA's lithograph *Lone Lily* (30 x 22 inches), 1999; signed and numbered.



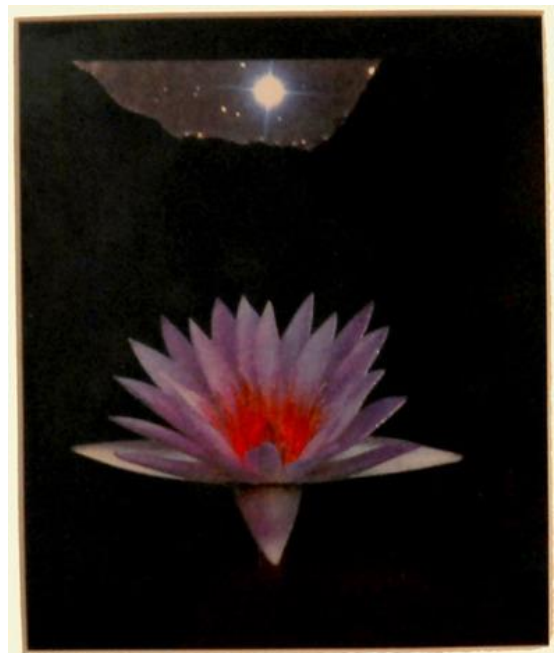
To the right is an image of an acrylic painting on canvas (46x37 inches) offered by RoGallery with the title *Lonely Tune* and a date 1991.



Next, on the left, is an image of *Lonely Tune* Pictured



in the home and studio of Michael Knigin. To the right is a picture of the original collage that Michael used as a first step in the creation of *Lonely Tune*. The



collage was photographed and projected on the

canvas and painted by air brush! It seems very likely also to have been used in the production of our lithographs.

It is time to return to the Mylar Method that Michael employed in the production of our lithographs. Let me again turn to Andrew Vlady's paper and slightly paraphrase his description:

[In the Mylar Method] ... phototechnical "transport" ... [is used to transfer] the artist's autographic images drawn on translucent acetate onto photo-sensitized aluminum plates that were [then] chemically treated to be ink-receptive printing elements. In traditional lithography, by comparison, the artist creates the autographic image directly on the stone or metal plate with greasy pencils, which in turn is transformed into an ink-receptive printing element through a chemical treatment called "etching" or "acidification".

He continues:

Technically, lithography means drawing on stone. "Chemical Printing," is the generic term given to printing from a flat surface (planographic, planography) by Lithography's inventor Alois Senefelder. Both lithography and the Mylar Method are branches of chemical printing.

The use of Mylar-based transfer lithography was assaulted by the purists who asserted, and I quote¹³:

... that it would, "...in the interest of ease and expediency destroy lithography as a creative art, leaving in its place no more than a coarse shadow: an ersatz plastic art in which convenience and economy with serve as poor substitutes for quality."

With regard to this claim, let me quote from a book published in 1982, "Lithography: 200 years of Art, History & Technique" edited by Domenico Porzio with collaboration of Rosalba Tabanelli. They observe that:

Such great artists as Corot, Fantin-Latour, Redon, and Picasso have made transfer lithography acceptable, having overcome, in works of indisputable quality, the bitter controversy unleashed at the end of the last century (and still not totally settled) by those purists who totally rejected its use.

¹³ I took this quote from images of a brochure titled The Mylar Method Manifesto, authored by Mel Hunter and signed by 8 leading fine-art lithographers including Michael Knigin. The Manifesto appeared in the late 1970's. In 1984, Hunter published a book (cf. Amazon): The New Lithography: A Complete Guide for Artists and Printers in the Use of Modern Translucent Materials for the Creation of Hand-Drawn Original Fine-Art Lithographic Prints

These Italian authors were apparently unaware that the bitter controversy had re-erupted in the US just a few years earlier. Most importantly is that they identify the critical criteria for resolving such disputes - "works of indisputable quality."

This is my segue to turn from technique to consider these beautiful lithographs. We can return to discuss technique afterwards with people far more expert than I.

What struck me upon first viewing the work was a vague recollection of a famous line from a poet or philosopher about the universe being revealed in the wondrous beauty of a flower. Research on "[BrainyQuotes](#)" yielded some wonderful food for thought:

*To see a world in a grain of sand and heaven in a wild flower Hold infinity in the palm of your hand and eternity in an hour. **William Blake***

This was the line that first arose for me in experiencing *Lone Lily*. I was surprised at the number of thinkers who found cosmic connections to a flower:

*Pick a flower on Earth and you move the farthest star. **Paul Dirac** (one of the 20th Century's greatest physicists)*

*One could not pluck a flower without troubling a star. **Loren Eiseley** (American anthropologist, educator, and author who wrote about anthropology for the lay person in eloquent, poetic style)*

Among numerous thoughts about flowers from women, I found this from Dorothea Dix:

*The rose is the flower and handmaiden of love - the lily, her fair associate, is the emblem of beauty and purity. **Dorothea Dix** ((1802-1887) was an author, teacher and reformer; especially for the mentally ill)*

Finally, I found the following quote from Yukio Mishima very intriguing, considering Knigin's abiding interest in Japanese art:

*By means of microscopic observation and astronomical projection the lotus flower [very similar in appearance to the lily] can become the foundation for an entire theory of the universe and an agent whereby we may perceive Truth. **Yukio Mishima** (Yukio Mishima is the pen name of Kimitake Hiraoka, a Japanese author, poet, playwright, actor, model, film director, founder of the Tatenokai, and nationalist.-Mishima is considered one of the most important Japanese authors of the 20th century. b. 1925 – d. 1970 by seppuku)*

I'll complete my exploration of these delightful pieces by referencing an art critic. In September 1996, Helen A. Harrison of the NY Times reviewed an East End Arts Council (Riverhead, LI) Exhibit. She wrote:

Organized by the photographer Jay Hoops, the exhibition features 13 artists who use computers either to manipulate existing images or to generate original imagery.

She observes:

Michael Knigin transplants flowers from the garden to the cosmos, floating his floral forms in an imaginary galaxy. In this alien context, the blossoms take on the character of space ships in botanical disguise, as if they had been sent out to pollinate the heavens.

Is this reference appropriate to a discussion of Lone Lily? I really don't know, but at least Ms. Harrison didn't have to go to "BrainyQuotes.com" to find a very poetic interpretation.

Before I open the discussion, I want to acknowledge the wonderful help that I received from Joan Kraisky-Knigin (extended conversations and finding and sharing many, many images of relevant work and history), Andrew Vlady (via Skype from Mexico City and his essay – "Michael Knigin: Anatomy of a Master Artist-Lithographer"), Adjunct Professor Linda Berghoff (for enlightening conversations, reference materials and her excellent paper: "The Collaborative Print Workshop in American Since 1960"), Lynn Whitelaw, Michelle DiMattia and Christine Renc-Carter who was most patient in dealing with my endless questions about lithography.

And finally, I am struck by the sense – from my research and from the people in Michael's life with whom I was fortunate to interact – that they feel, as many of us feel about Abraham Rattner, that Michael is one of the finest artists/humanitarians of the 20th century that too few know enough about. I hope I have made a step in the right direction in remedying this situation for Michael Knigin.

Thank you for your patient attention – so tell me what do you see in these wonderful prints?